US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Albuquerque District

DRAFT SUPPLEMENT
to the
Section 205 Small Flood Control Project,
Little Puerco Wash, Gallup, New Mexico
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Prepared
by

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
ALBUQUERQUE DISTRICT
4101 Jefferson Plaza NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109

February 2004

DRAFT SUPPLEMENT
to the
Section 205 Small Flood Control Project, Little Puerco Wash, Gallup, New Mexico
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The public review period for this Draft Supplement to the Final EA is 30 days, from **February 5, 2004 to March 5, 2004.**

Paper copies of this document are available for review at:
Octavia Fellin Public Library, 115 W. Hill Ave, Gallup, NM

A copy of the original Final EA and FONSI is available for viewing at

http://www.spa.usace.army.mil/

Please provide all comments by March 5, 2004, to:

Champe Green
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
4101 Jefferson Plaza NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109
Phone 505-342-3357
Email: champe.b.green@usace.army.mil

DRAFT SUPPLEMENT
to the
Section 205 Small Flood Control Project, Little Puerco Wash, Gallup, New Mexico
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Background

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Albuquerque District signed a cost sharing agreement with the City of Gallup on September 30, 1996, to conduct a Feasibility Study on the Little Puerco Wash. This study was conducted under the authority contained in Section 205 of the 1948 Flood Control Act (Public Law 80-858), as amended. Section 205 provides authority to the Chief of Engineers to plan and construct small local protection projects which have not already been specifically authorized by Congress. A "Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)" was released by the Corps in January 2000 after public comments were received on the draft EA.

This Draft Supplement amends the "Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact, Section 205 Water Resources Development Act Small Flood Control Project, Little Puerco Wash, Gallup, New Mexico, January 2000." The purpose of this supplement is to describe a proposed change in the location of the mitigation site for the dam and floodspace construction impacts.

The EA/FONSI of January 2000 addressed the potential effects of alternative plans developed to provide higher levels of flood protection to floodplain communities, development, and wildlife habitat from flood flows in Little Puerco Wash, which flows through Gallup, New Mexico. Together, the integrated Feasibility Study/EA presented a complete package addressing the planning and environmental objectives of the project. The recommended plan called for the

construction of an earthen and rock dam located immediately upstream of the Pepsi-Cola Bottling Plant on the Little Puerco Wash and for the reconstruction of box culverts located downstream of the proposed dam. The recommended dam would not have a permanent flood pool. The recommended plan also called for the mitigation of vegetation and habitat disturbed or destroyed in the dam and floodspace footprint during construction. During the feasibility phase, the USFWS, Corps, and the city of Gallup agreed upon mitigation for the removal of riparian habitat at the proposed earthen dam construction site. The preferred mitigation alternative would have provided for the creation of approximately 2.0 acres of riparian wildlife habitat to be constructed at the Gallup Municipal Golf Course where sufficient water is available to maintain the habitat.

Proposed Action and Change to the Final EA and FONSI

The City of Gallup has requested that the mitigation for the riparian wildlife habitat lost along the Little Puerco Wash channel within the floodspace be established within the dam site and floodspace footprint (approximately 2.5 acres; Figure 1), rather than the City Golf Course. On August 25, 2003, a Corps Ecologist evaluated the existing riparian habitat in the dam and floodspace footprint. The inventory revealed that approximately 0.55 acres of riparian habitat along an ephemeral channel would be removed by dam construction. The area contained 236 narrow-leaf cottonwoods (*Populus angustifolia*) in 23 discrete clusters along a stringer

approximately 30 ft. wide and 800 ft. long. Most, if not all of the trees within a cluster were mature coppice (vegetative) sprouts growing from a common root system on the channel banks, and many had substantial crown damage. An increment boring of a dominant tree indicated an age of between 37-40 years. Diameters at breast height ranged from 6 inches to 12 inches. Seventeen exotic Russian olives (*Elaeagnus angustifolia)* were also counted, in various stages between sapling and mature tree. A 0.05 acre grove of coyote willow (*Salix exigua*) shrubs was also encountered in a seep just east of the channel. No other riparian plants were noted.

The two native species noted above are well-adapted to sediment loading, and it is believed these species would successfully grow and mature in the newly excavated floodspace. The upstream drainage area behind the proposed dam is 1.69 sq. miles, or approximately 1,081 acres, much of which is drained by curbs and delivered to Little Puerco Wash downstream of the dam site. Additionally, culvert constrictions at Nizhoni Boulevard that were identified for removal during the feasibility study will remain, thus reducing the sediment originally anticipated to inflow into the floodspace. Thus, substantial sediment loading within the floodspace is not anticipated. Therefore, the Corps and the City of Gallup propose to plant approximately 200 narrow-leaf cottonwood poles and 1,000 coyote willow whips in the dam and floodspace footprint (Plate 1) immediately following completion of dam construction (winter 2004/2005). Geologic drilling conducted in January 1998, during the project feasibility stage indicated that groundwater was present within an acceptable range for planting. Thus, the feasibility of a successful planting and survival of cottonwood poles and willow whips is

probable. Additionally, approximately 300 assorted riparian and upland shrubs, including Berlandier's wolfberry (*Lycium berlandieri)*, skunkbush sumac (*Rhus trilobata*), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens),* common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus)*, whitestem gooseberry (*Ribes inerme*), and stretchberry (*Forestiera pubescens)* would be planted in the transition zone between the upland and riparian areas (Plate 1). Western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii)* would be seeded and mulched in the shrub zone between shrubs. Planting would be accomplished by and using the techniques developed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Los Lunas Plant Materials Center.

An asphalt foot trail outside of the perimeter of the mitigation area would be established for recreational use by the public. A recreation analysis estimated total annual visits and use of this proposed recreational trail to be 69,325. Benefit to cost ratio would vary between 3.05:1 and 9.30:1. Total costs of the proposed trail would be approximately $70,000.00. The proposed trail would be marked at all access points with warning signs informing the general public that it is a violation of City of Gallup code to allow unleashed and uncontrolled pets on City lands. Gallup Animal Control officers and City police officers would have authority to issue citations for violations. The signs and patrol activities would be expected to minimize pet disturbance to wildlife using the mitigation area.

Compliance and Cumulative Impacts

There are no known federally or state listed or proposed-for-listing rare animals or plants or critical habitat within the proposed dam site or floodspace, nor are there any known cultural

resources in the project footprint. No change in the Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide 43 permit is required. The proposed change in mitigation areas would have no effect on the long term socio-economic environment or hazardous, toxic, or radiological wastes. The cumulative impacts of the proposed change in mitigation would be negligible on the resources of the construction area.

The Corps and the City of Gallup believe that mitigation strategy described above is equivalent to that planned in the preferred alternative of the January 2000 "Section 205 Small Flood Control Project, Little Puerco Wash, Gallup, New Mexico Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact."

References

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District. 2000. Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment, Section 205 Small Flood Control Project, Little Puerco Wash, Gallup, New Mexico. January 2000. Albuquerque, New Mexico.